

A

REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Thursday, April 17. 1707.

I Prepar'd the Reader for something a little peculiar in this Paper, by telling him, the general Observation, I should make on the Substance of the two last Papers, should be the Work of this.

And my Observation is, that from the Proceedings of King Henry VIII. in pulling down the Pope's Supremacy, demolishing and suppressing the *Monastical Idolatry*, is to be deduced; the Reason why, and Manner how the Church of England, now established, came to be reform'd into an Episcopal Church, the Church of Scotland into a Presbyterian, and by what Steps, and on what Occasions, the Dissenters in either Kingdom come to dissent from them.

As this will bring us to the true present State of All Britain, as to the Case of Religion, which is the Head I am upon; so I hope, the Connection of the Story will be

preserv'd to the Satisfaction of the Reader, and my looking so far back be found not unprofitable, since nothing can contribute so much to giving us a clear Light in things, as to go back to their Causes and Originals, and from thence observe both the Reasons and the Degrees, why and by which they come to their present Condition.

When King Henry VIII. pull'd down the Pope's Supremacy, his Ambition getting the Predominancy of his Devotion, guided him to make himself the Usurper, in the room of that Usurper he had dethron'd; he forgot the true Gospel Supremacy of Christ Jesus, which if it had been Ecclesiastically establish'd, had prevented great Part of the Blood and Confusion which happen'd afterward, and the Royalty of the Crown had receiv'd no Diminution of just Authority, only a due Restraint from those Excursions, which it has,

has made upon Scriptural Authority since, and the Disputes against which has brought most of the Divisions, which have rent this Church and Kingdom ever since.

When the King, I say, pull'd down the Supremacy of the Pope, he immediately erected that of his own, and that in a most tyrannical and extravagant Manner ; this, as I have noted in another place, was but de-throning one Devil, to set up another, pulling down the Exorbitance of a foreign, to exalt the Power of a domestick Tyrant, and indeed he exercis'd his new Supremacy with all the most unsufferable Insolencies, that his unbounded Lusts could dictate, and put to Death every body that did but refuse to own it.

On this new erected Monster of Royal Supremacy, which modern Authors call the *Regale*, has been built most of the unhappy Disputes between the *Dissenters* and the Church of *England*, and especially that about the Government of the Church, under the Tyranny of Diocesan, Episcopacy ; nay, I may say, that here began the immediate Differences, which shew'd themselves even in the Infancy of the Reformation.

However, I would have this noted also, that this is not altogether to be laid to the Charge of the first Reformers, no nor of the great Instruments in this King's Time, of opening the first Light to the Protestant Church ; for the Reformation was very young, and under great Discouragements, and the furious Temper of this King was such, that if they went never so little faster, than his Caprice and Humour could bear, it was their immediate Destruction ; if he brought on the Reformatioa with one Hand, he put it back with another ; if he executed a Papist for denying his tyrannical Supremacy to day, he burnt a faithful Martyr for denying Papish Idolatry to morrow ; to day he pulls down Romish Tyranny, to morrow erects his six bloody Articles, and Blood was the Price of relishing any thing he pleas'd to espouse ; the Heads and Encouragers of the Reformation therefore were glad to lay hold on any Handle, that presented it self to pull down that Insolence of *Rome*, which they struggled with ; and in Hopes to pull down her whole Power, they scrupled not exalt-

ing the *Regale*, not perhaps foreseeing, that tho' they pull'd down one Tyranny, they exalted another ; that the Mischief remained, tho' the Masters were chang'd, or that this Monster was big with future Mischiefs, which generating from one another, would still bring the Church under, and keep her in perpetual and unscriptural Bondage.

In the Simplicity of their Souls, I say, they did this ; and whatever follow'd, they were so far in the right, since by it they effectually laid the Axe to the Root of Religious Subjection, and the impious Usurpation of the Church of *Rome*.

This fixing the Supremacy on the King, however, was the Foundation of two things, which are now the Subject of so much Strife in this Island, and which have not protracted only, but rendred abortive all the Hopes of a general Uniformity, and till now obstructed the common Unions of Charity and good Neighbourhood among us.— These are,

1. The Right of the civil Magistrate to appoint Ceremonies, and give the Sanction of necessary things in the Worship of GOD in themselves indifferent.
2. The Government of the Church by Diocesan Bishops.

The Supremacy in Matters Ecclesiastical being lodg'd in the King, the Church was entirely thrown into his Arms ; he was not only its civil Protector, as we all allow in the Article to that purpose now, but he was the general Director, and prescrib'd what Injunctions he thought ; nay, to such a Height did that King carry his Prerogative over GOD's Church, that he exercis'd meer abstracted Popery, even in the very Act of suppressing Popery, and without pretending to the Infallibility, yet affirm'd the Ecclesiastical Legislature in all its Points, as effectually as the Pope himself.

While the Church became thus subjected to the arbitrary Will of Kingly Power, 'tis no wonder, that her Reformation, which follow'd immediately on the Death of this King, bore some Analogy to the Schemes laid in his Time, preserv'd the *Regale*, and all the usurp'd Authority which was so lately instrumental in the Work of Reformation,

and

and no wonder if the Reformation from hence became too partial and imperfect.

'Tis true, that Queen *Mary* renouncing again the Supremacy, and restoring the Church of *Rome*, and the Authority, Queen *Elizabeth* was not very forward in reasserting it, nor ever did pretend to it in the full Manner and absolute Degree, that King *Henry* had exercis'd it; yet this it left behind it, that the Church was subjected to

the civil Magistrate, and the Power of carrying on a further Reformation was as it were given up to the Crown.

And here began Dissenting from the Church, and this is the End and true Reason of my looking back upon these things, which I hope, the Readers of this Paper will think is neither unpleasant or unprofitable; I shall pursue it farther in my next.

MISCELLANEA.

THE Matter of Bankrupts, I brought last Paper to the Bill for two Thirds in Number and Value; I have acknowledg'd as much as any Body can desire of me, as to the Abuses committed in the Case of that Law, by a Knot of subtil, designing, case-hardened Wretches, whose Consciences scrupling no Oaths, led them to all the Latitudes, the Letter of the Law too unwarily laid open before them.

But as this is no way a Charge upon an innocent and well-meaning Man, so I say, it was no way a Reason, why that Law, which was certainly the best Provision that ever was made in this Matter, should have been abolish'd; it was indeed a good Reason why it should have been amended, and why necessary Clauses might have been added to make it effectual on one hand, and secure it from Frauds on the other; but to repeal the whole Law was a meer Riot of those, that were more afraid of the Effect of its honest Meaning, than injur'd by the ill Use made of it.

To illustrate this, I cannot but leave an Instance on Record, of which I was an Eye-Witness, and the Persons are not so far off, but they may yet be pointed out, nor so ill known, but they may be mark'd, nor I so afraid of them, but I may still name them, if it appear needful.

A poor unfortunate Citizen, who had fail'd for a very considerable Sum several Years before, and had been persecuted to the last Degree, even to Want of all Manner of Comfort, almost grown old in Misery,

and out of Hope of Redress, apply'd himself by Virtue of this Law to a Judge, one of the Barons of the Exchequer, to be reliev'd: If I remember, his List of Debts amounted to about 1700*l.* and the Number of Creditors to about 140 or thereabouts; of these, the poor Man had not only procur'd 1500*l.* in Value, but all in Number, 3 or 4 excepted, to sign or acquiesce in a Writing of Composition, the Composition was really for nothing at all down; for every Body saw the poor Man had nothing, or but very little to subsist on, but the Conditions were no Part of the Act, the poor Debtor was to give his Bond to pay a small Composition at a certain Term of Years, and it was very plain, the Design of his Creditors was to have him deliver'd, and be set free, for as to Payment they expected nothing.

It would have mov'd a Turk to hear this Person tell his Story to the Judge, and I could observe Tears fall from the Eyes of some of his Creditors themselves that stood by, as well as from others that were not concern'd in it.

He told the Way how he came to fail, he told the flourishing Circumstances he was in before, he told the Judge, that when he first miscarry'd, he call'd his Creditors together, and offer'd them all he had, and made it appear to them, that if no Losses befall the Estate, it would be sufficient to pay them all; but if they would give him Time to get it in, he offer'd 15*s.* per Pound, out of it, and he produc'd an Instrument sign'd a great many Years before, in which almost